

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

JESSICA WILSON is the Grants Director at Washington Strategic Consulting and Graduated with a degree in Political Science in 2010 from Cal Poly

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Jessica Wilson

Jessica has been with Washington Strategic Consulting (WSC) since she graduated from Cal Poly, roughly four years ago. Her tenure at WSC started with her internship in the fall of her senior year and continued when she was offered a job and moved to Washington D.C. promptly after graduation. Initially, she started off as a legitimate lobbyist, doing research and working on getting her clients advocacy meetings on the hill. In the last two years, her work has shifted as legislation was passed that changed the nature of the lobbying industry. Many lobbying firms were put in a difficult situation, and shifted towards federal grants. Jessica now focuses on trying to get her clients federal grants to meet their funding needs. She now does federal grant writing, mostly working with hospitals, universities, and municipalities.

Lobbying was not Jessica's ideal job when she graduated from Cal Poly. If you had asked her in college what she wanted to do, lobbying would not have come to mind. However, after completing her internship, she was excited to graduate and actually work in a field cohesive to her degree. In the beginning, Jessica said, she did not fully understand the profession of lobbying. Her understanding was similar to most students, the negative connotation it has and the little bits and pieces discussed in classes. But as she was exposed to more on

the job, she became fascinated with lobbying. She enjoys getting to experience all ends of the spectrum in D.C., influencing legislation being written, and getting hands on experience at every turn. Jessica gets to utilize her writing skills, which she honed at Cal Poly; she works with clients, and she ventures to the hill to work with the federal government.

In the future, Jessica foresees the possibility of graduate school, but she is in no hurry. She articulated that many of her friends are finishing up graduate degrees and unsure of where they want to go. Jessica would like to continue with her work and continue to figure out concretely where her career is headed. Overall, she is really happy with where she is. She stumbled into being a grants consultant, and loves it. The foundational knowledge of how the government works and how the budgets pass, which she learned at Cal Poly, has been very useful for her.

Jessica offered up some great advice for undergraduates: “No one is doing what they thought they wanted to do when they graduated.” Jessica said she was right where most students are right before they graduate college, unsure about their futures. She encourages students to be open about their possible paths: “Don’t cross anything off your list. Take any opportunity you can, whether it is for a month, six months, or a year.” She loved San Luis Obispo, but said the best decision she made in college was getting out of SLO and figuring out what happens after you leave “this magical place.” Jessica seems to be a driven, down to earth realist. She is the first one to point out that the job market may be challenging, but she also knows the importance of being proactive and taking initiative. She invites students to talk realistically with professors, as they know how you work and can offer guidance. Jessica is a great example of taking the ‘learn by doing’ motto at Cal Poly into the real world.